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ON THE ATTEMPTS TO ASCERTAIN THE POPULATION
OF IRELAND.

THE following paper is upon a subject so generally interesting to Ireland, and particularly to this county, that we have great pleasure in inserting it, especially as it comes from a quarter where accuracy may be expected. The language employed, however, with respect to the incorrectness of some of the Population Returns, and the manner in which they were made out, appears to us, to be on some occasions too strong. It must often have been very difficult, for instance, to ascertain the exact boundaries of parishes, and altogether impossible for those who had the general charge of carrying the Population Act into effect, to know, in every case, who were the most suitable persons to be employed, or to judge of the accuracy of the multifarious reports which they received. The returns were made on oath. How far the Bench of Magistrates met at Quarter Sessions, in whom the choice of enumerators, and other circumstances depended, did their duty, we have no means of knowing. The Population Abstract has been printed for this very purpose, among others, that it may be circulated and rigidly scrutinized. When we consider that it is the first actual census which has been taken of the population of this kingdom, and that it must have been a work of immense difficulty, we will not be surprised although it should be found to be defective. In the three enumerations taken of the population of Great Britain, improvements were successively suggested by experience; and we have no doubt that similar effects will take place in this country.—We are only beginning to know ourselves, and to attract a due share of public attention. Ireland will not continue long to be an *unknown country*.—A spirit of inquiry has gone abroad through the length and breadth of the land, from which we augur the most auspicious consequences. Amidst the difficulties of a first attempt, therefore, we would not willingly accuse those concerned in executing the Population Act, of culpable inattention.

Some of the following remarks, however, are of far too much importance to be withheld from the public; and we would earnestly solicit those who are able to give us authentic and accurate information on other parts of the Report, to favour us with their communications. An Irish journal should, in present circumstances, endeavour to present something

else than mere amusement. The discrepancy between the Parliamentary census of the town and county of Carrickfergus, and that to be found in M'Skimin's history, does not appear to be great, except in the number of dwelling-houses, which, according to the latter account, is 80 more than in the former. This appears rather strange, when the difference in the number of inhabitants is only seven. In the preliminary observations to the Population Abstract, we find it mentioned, that in ascertaining the number of houses, nothing farther was necessary than to examine whether any mistake had been made in the series of numbers. It is the more remarkable that this discrepancy should appear, when we consider that, in the printed abstract of the Population Returns, page 256, we are desired, in place of 967 houses, to read, 1,367. The present number seems to have been deliberately fixed upon as correct.—EDITOR.

To the EDITOR of the BELFAST MAGAZINE.

GOVERNMENT has at last published the returns of the census taken in 1821, and forwarded them to the several counties and public libraries in the kingdom. Feeling deeply interested in every thing that concerns the statistics of the country, I cannot refrain from passing a few remarks on these returns, and hazarding a few observations with respect to their accuracy.

From 1672 till 1822, not less than seventeen attempts were made to ascertain the population of Ireland. Of these, thirteen were by order of Government; but all appear to have been in a certain degree unsuccessful—the usual termination of almost all Irish projects. Several causes might be assigned for these repeated failures. They have been, doubtless, in a great measure owing to the prevailing suspicions of the people respecting the intentions of Government, at the different times when these attempts were made; which induced them frequently to give false or evasive answers to every question asked; and in many instances, even to refuse admittance to the enumerators. I knew some enumerators, however, who, by a rigid attention, and especially by after inquiries at their friends and acquaintance, were enabled to obtain all the information wanted; but as this was not the case generally, I consider the principal cause of failure to have arisen from the appointment of incompetent persons to the office of enumerators; as well as from the inattention of those who were intrusted with condensing and arranging the reports, prior to their being laid before the public.—The population returns of 1813, were generally so glaringly imperfect, that, in 1815, a

new act was passed, transferring the appointment of the enumerators from the Grand Juries at Assizes, to the assistant barristers and magistrates, at Special Sessions, expressly convened for that purpose. In the summer of 1821, this act was carried into execution; but in making out the appointment, there was still a full share of that patronage which had proved so fatal to the successful execution of the former act. Individuals were, in many cases, nominated to more parishes than one; and in some instances even to half baronies—an arrangement which was the more unsuitable on the present occasion, as the inquiries, and returns to be made, were at least doubly more complicated than those required in 1813. One entire half barony in the county of Antrim was surveyed and reported on, by a person on horseback, who employed a kind of *whipper-in* to enter the houses, make the necessary inquiries, and report the result to the equestrian enumerator; and in this shameless insufficient manner, the census was exclusively manufactured; not only houses and persons being omitted, but even hamlets!

I am still willing, however, to consider the general result of this last attempt as a much nearer approximation to the truth than any that preceded it. We know that perfection is rarely to be expected in any thing of this kind; errors must and will abound; but in the present instance, I fear there are so many as considerably to impair its value, and prevent it from being reckoned an accurate account of the population. These errors it is as difficult to detect, as it is to specify: but some of them may be shown in the returns of *this* county; which it may be presumed presents a fair specimen of the whole. Indeed if manifest errors are to be found in the survey of this portion of the kingdom, we may naturally look for more serious ones in other parts of Ireland, where, generally speaking, the persons employed could not have been nearly so well qualified for the task. I shall advert to the following, as obvious mistakes in the returns for the county Antrim.

Connor parish, we are informed, includes those of *Solar* and *Killiglen*. This is not correct; for though both of these are ecclesiastically united to the Prebend of Connor, they are situated within what is now called the parish of *Cairncastle*, and are at least ten miles in a direct line from Connor.—*Parkgate* village is noticed as being in the parish of *Antrim*, whereas it stands nearly in the centre of the united parish of *Dunagore* and *Grange of Nalteen*.—*Ballydure* village, we are told, is in *Ballyeaston* parish, and is recorded as containing 98 dwelling-houses, 111 families, and 483 inhabitants. How will the reader be surprised to learn that there is neither town, village, nor hamlet of that name in the county! It

cannot be a typographical mistake for Ballynure, as that village is marked elsewhere in its proper place and parish; and the number both of its houses and inhabitants is different. As these returns have been circulated through every county in Ireland, and are safely deposited in our public libraries, it is not unlikely posterity may conclude that the once populous village of *Ballydure* has been engulfed by an earthquake; and that Killiglen, Solar, and Parkgate, have been removed to their present sites by some tremendous convulsion.—*Doagh* village is said to be situated within the parish of Ballyeaston. This is also inaccurate; it is in the Grange of Doagh, which Grange is extra-parochial.—*Ballyclare* village, we are informed, is within the parish of Ballynure, and is said to contain 26 dwelling-houses, and 127 inhabitants. It is within the Grange of Doagh, and contains at least three times the number of both. On the other hand, Ballyeaston village, we are told, contains 119 dwelling-houses, and 546 inhabitants. I can state from my own knowledge, that the amount of both items is nearly one-half overrated.

When we compare the census of the town and county of Carrickfergus, with the schedule of the same given in the second edition of M'Skimin's history of that place, we discern several discrepancies: which are the more surprising, as the author of the history was the person employed on the occasion, and must have made similar returns with those printed under his own inspection. The following are a few of the items as they severally stand, in the Government Return, and the History of Carrickfergus:—

<i>Government Return.</i>		<i>History of Carrickfergus.</i>	
Dwelling-houses,	1,367		1,447
Male Inhabitants,	3,889		3,915
Female ditto,	4,134		4,115
At School, Males,	427		437
Females,	343		351
Persons between 80 and 90 years of age,	26		33

Several other unaccountable mistakes might be noticed; but enough has been shown to awaken public attention to the accuracy of the Report, that has lately been prepared at so much expense.

G. G.

Belfast, Feb. 1825.

The following is a summary of the Population of Ireland, from the Returns under the Population Act of 1821:—

	<i>Males.</i>	<i>Females.</i>	<i>Total of Persons.</i>
LEINSTER,.....	859,798	897,694	1,757,492
MUNSTER,.....	960,119	975,493	1,935,612
ULSTER,	968,061	1,030,433	1,998,494
CONNAUGHT,.....	553,948	556,281	1,110,229
	3,341,926	3,459,901	6,801,827